DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 516 CE 073 524

AUTHOR Angel, N. Faye; Mooney, Marianne
TITLE Work-in-Progress: Career and Work Education for Elementary Students.
PUB DATE Dec 96
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (Cincinnati, OH, December 5-8, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Awareness; *Career Development; Career Education; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Education; *Integrated Curriculum; *Learning Activities; *Portfolio Assessment; Portfolios (Background Materials); Program Implementation

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how career and work activities can be incorporated into the everyday curricula of elementary students and made part of their records through use of Individual Career Development Portfolios (ICDP). It promotes use of the ICDP as both a collection of student works that result from career awareness activities and experiences throughout the school year and an assessment instrument to evaluate depth of career awareness and measure writing skills, thinking and organizing, academic competencies, teamwork and interpersonal skills, and evaluation abilities. The next section provides an ICDP model, mission statement, and objectives that can be used to develop curricula that integrate career and work activities. A seven-step model includes the following components: major players, mission statement, objectives, career awareness goals, career awareness portfolio, recognition of accomplishments, and portfolio advanced to next grade level. The following section discusses 14 career/work activities (and their competencies) that can be used as meaningful, single exercises or in conjunction with others to reinforce career awareness concepts while building on important competencies. Each activity generates a visual product representing students' work which is placed in the ICDP to illustrate their achievement and competencies. Suggestions are made for implementation, recommendations to make the process more successful, and assessment recommendations. Contains 18 references. (YLB)

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WORK-IN-PROGRESS: Career and Work Education for Elementary Students

by N. Faye Angel and Marianne Mooney

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Interested parent, "How was Career Day? Did you learn a lot of neat things about careers?" Uninterested Child, "It was boring. All they did was stand in front of the classroom and talk to us...Why do we need to learn about careers now--we're not even in middle school. We have lots of time to decide what we want to do." All too frequently instead of career activities generating interest in careers and preparation for work at a future time, they have been a "turn-off." In fact, this is the exact conversation one of the authors had with her daughter. To be effective, career development education must emphasize a long-term, systematic approach to successful adult careers and community living. It is not a singular event, as evidenced above, but an "on-going effort that spans from preschool to retirement" (Missouri LINC, 1989). Career education at an early age encourages students to form positive self-concepts about the role of work and workers in our society. Career awareness activities that are integrated into the daily curriculum give students the opportunity to practice academic, communication, and social skills while enhancing self-esteem, self-knowledge, and problem-solving skills. These integrated activities can result in meaningful links between daily activities and the school curriculum. Dr. James Hoerner (1995b) believes that from the beginning of school, knowledge must be imparted which "maintains a theme or focus that people work to live and that there is a positive 'connectedness' between the schooling process and living productive lives" (p. 23). In fact, when career and work awareness activities are not integrated into the curricula, counselors and teachers are limited in the impact they can have on students.

Studies show a lack of knowledge among elementary age students about careers and the value of work. In a Gallup poll commissioned by Kapow Grand Met, 907 fourth- to sixth-

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graders were surveyed about the work their mothers and fathers performed. Only 48% could explain what their fathers did at work, and 57% knew what their mothers did at work (Deutschman, 1992). In a similar study conducted by the Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education (FASE), 934 children in grades third through sixth were asked to name five jobs. Their responses were limited and unimaginative. The top five answers were teacher, principal, doctor, nurse, and lawyer. 51 children had no answers at all. In fact, only 16% of the respondents could name the jobs of family members (Skolnik, 1995). This clearly reflects limited exposure to a variety of career options. It appears children are also not learning the qualities associated with hard work. In a 1991 study by the Committee for Economic Development, 78% of the 408 employers surveyed felt recent high school graduates lacked disciplined work habits and dedication to their jobs (Deutschman, 1992). Again, the necessity for career awareness at an early age is emphasized. It has been said that a child's positive vision of the future is the most powerful predictor of success (Auman, 1995). If so, students must be made aware of the career possibilities available to them and the work involved in achieving these possibilities.

This article focuses on the how career and work activities can be incorporated into the everyday curricula of elementary students and made part of the students' records through use of the Individual Career Development Portfolios (ICDP). A seven step model has been developed (see Figure 1) along with a mission statement and objectives to guide teachers, counselors, and administrators in implementing a program that addresses the needs of students, teachers, counselors, and the community. The bulk of the treatise discusses 14 career and work activities that were tested in three third grade classrooms. Competencies based upon *Virginia's Standards of Learning* for third grade students, the *National Career Development Guidelines* for elementary students, and the 1991 *SCANS* report are outlined

MODEL FOR INDIVIDUAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIGURE 1

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for each activity. In addition, there are sections on implementation, recommendations to help alleviate problems, and suggestions for evaluation and assessment. However, the thrust of the article emphasizes a systematic approach to career and work education through the integration of career awareness curricula at the elementary level.

The Importance of Portfolio Development

The Individual Career Development Portfolio (ICDP) at the elementary level is a collection of student works that result from various career awareness activities and experiences throughout the school year. Activities, for the most part, are integrated into everyday lesson plans and address a multitude of grade appropriate competencies. Classroom teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, parents, and community members actively participate in constructing career awareness portfolio activities suitable for all students and all content areas. A systematic approach to portfolio development guarantees a quality learning experience for students and an alternative teaching strategy for educators. The ICDP approach allows students to see themselves as a part of a larger system, a community, that depends on the work of many to function successfully and efficiently. In addition, not only school personnel, but families and community members are viewed as key players in the student's career development. Hoerner (1995c), one of the leading proponents of ICDPs, stresses the importance of all stakeholders being active participants in the portfolio development process.

The section on *Suggested Activities* describes several exercises that build on each other to help students become more aware of the numerous career and work opportunities. Each activity results in a portable, tangible outcome that can be placed in an Individual Career Development Portfolio. These ICDP entries focus on more than just career investigation; activities have been developed that require students to participate in a number of interesting and fun adventures. Unlike the traditional "Career Day" humdrum, the activities result in

individualized, "hands-on" products that are based on decisions made by the student. Although there are some group activities, the final result is based upon individual input and decisions made by the students that are congruent with their developmental traits (McDaniels, 1993). ICDPs are portable and easily up-dated to reflect changes in the level of career awareness and interest.

Hoerner (1995a) insists that the ICDP belongs to the student. It should be an ongoing undertaking of which they are proud. Corrections are encouraged during these integrated activities designed to develop educational competencies. However, once the final modifications are complete, they enter the portfolio "as is". Teachers and parents are not allowed to criticize the final product or bleed on it with red ink. Of course, adults should always ADMIRE it! Educators and parents can use the ICDP as an instrument to initiate discussions of self-concept, careers, community, and work. The career portfolio will represent a substantial amount of work as well as accomplishments of writing, reading, analyzing, synthesizing, communicating, interacting, and evaluating.

Finally, the ICDP can be used as an assessment instrument. Not just for evaluating the depth of career awareness, but to measure writing skills, thinking and organizing, academic competencies, team work and people adeptness, information gathering proficiencies, and evaluation abilities. In addition, because of its portability, it will provide an audit trail for students as they move from grade to grade and interest to interest. AS the ICDP develops, trends should emerge to provide a general direction for the students as they enter middle school and begin career exploration.

The Career Awareness Model and Methodology

The ICDP model, mission statement, and objectives given in this section can be used as a starting point for developing curricula that integrate career and work activities. The mission

statement and objectives are self-explanatory and need little discussion. Further, they are inclusive enough to represent the intentions of most schools. If needed, however, guidance counselor, teachers, and other major stakeholders can modify them to improve relevance for their specific population.

Since this was a new undertaking, few of the major players agreed on how to proceed with integrating career and work education into the curricula. A two hour planning session left the participants frustrated and directionless. To get a handle on what was to be accomplished, the ICDP model (see Figure 1) was developed and a mission statement written. As it turned out, these were the **two** most important components in achieving successful planning sessions and a workable implementation strategy. They put everyone on the "same page."

As the ICDP model shows, the first stage brings together the major stakeholders. From these two resources, manageable objectives can be written and career/work activities selected that readily and logically fit into the curricula. The mission statement (discussed in the next section) can be used, modified, or a new one can be written. Activities should be selected that address competencies, such as being a team player and being able to listen, as designated in the states' *Standards of Learning* and the *SCANS* report (1991). Several activities are suggested in the model. Each of these should have a visual outcome or product that can be placed into the ICDP. At the completion of the program, give students an opportunity to pull together this new information into a coherent unit of work by having an open house one afternoon or evening and invite the major stakeholders. The students are the guests-of-honor and they can proudly display their accomplishments and receive their deserved accolades. Note on the model that the ICDPs are advanced to the next grade and the process begins anew.

Mission Statement

The focus of the ICDP for elementary students is career and work awareness--it is not career exploration or career preparation. Age appropriate activities will provide exposure to a variety of different jobs, a familiarity with career information sources, and an awareness of why people work. These activities will be simple and the final product will be created by the student, for the student--not a complex work for the teachers to exhibit. They will not include tedious, prolonged tasks that may cause students to lose interest in becoming aware of numerous career possibilities. The process will emphasize pleasant experiences in the development of a career awareness portfolio that can advance with the students to the next grade or level. Students will maintain ownership of their individual portfolio. Teachers and parents can look at it, admire it, and discuss it, but they have no jurisdiction to grade or evaluate it in any manner after the completed activity has been prepared for entry. Career awareness is not about sorting or tracking, but about a liberating experience for our youth. Providing them with true options, helping them to learn how to evaluate their career experiences, and giving them direction for determining their career interest, will allow them to seek out a career that provides them with an acceptable wage and a satisfying, fulfilling life. The overall mission, then, is to foster an interest in careers and to help students become more informed about the various jobs that people in their community perform.

Objectives

- Expose students to many different jobs to increase their awareness that people work.
- Develop self-awareness by identifying interests, abilities, preferences, and current work skills in relation to careers.
- Identify reasons why people work.
- Assist students in learning about the community resources available where they can obtain more career information.
- Increase student career awareness so that students can name and define the general duties of at least five jobs.

- Direct students to resources and have them obtain specific information about two interesting jobs.
- Facilitate "hands-on" work experience related to careers and assist students in evaluating the experience.
- Integrate classroom activities with career awareness information such as writing workshops, art class, science, reading, etc.
- Establish or strengthen the linkage between education and businesses.
- Increase self-confidence in the performance of career related activities through successful completion of career awareness exercises.

Suggested Activities

The career/ work activities discussed in this section can be used as meaningful, single exercises or used in conjunction with others to reinforce career awareness concepts while continuing to build on important competencies. Each activity should generate a visual product representing the students' work which will be placed in the ICDP to illustrate their achievement and competencies. The activities, their worksheets, and actual student responses to the exercises are included in *Career Odyssey for Elementary Students: Teacher Resource Workbook* (Mooney & Angel, 1997). There are 14 activities and their competencies profiled in this paper, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. Remember these can be modified to provide more relevance to your population.

Activity #1: Teachers assist students in completing an Individual Self-Awareness Survey. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone's responses might be different. This survey should help students recognize the qualities and work skills they already possess and how they can be used to identify careers they may find appealing.

Competencies: This activity stresses individual work and individual differences by focusing on self-awareness and self-acceptance. Completing the survey will help them learn to organize their thoughts and write appropriate responses to communicate information about themselves.

Activity #2: Gather students in small groups of four or five. If possible have a member of the business community facilitate this exercise. As a team have them develop a list of jobs with which they are familiar. (The groups should be small enough so that all the children have a chance to participate.) Each student writes on his or her own paper all of the jobs or careers that the groups can name. Students in each group must agree on the job to be listed. Many times this has the effect of students "defending" a choice and naming the positive aspects of it. This encourages discussions about jobs and an exchange of ideas within the team structure. They should take turns naming the careers so everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the finished product. Teachers may help with spelling if requested to do so. The list should contain 10-15 jobs. As the groups calls out the jobs that have been named, they can be written on the board with checks given for repeats. The students can then compare and contrast the jobs that all teams listed with those that only some listed. Individually, students select two or three jobs from the list that they find most interesting by circling them on their papers. Immediately following this, the educational requirements of the different jobs are discussed in a question and answer session.

Competencies: This activity helps students develop abilities needed to work with others such as cooperating in a team and listening to others while making individual choice. They obtain experience giving reasons why their choice should be included. Compare and contrast abilities can be developed as students share information that they have in common as well as that upon which they differ. The question and answer session encourages students to ask questions that have arisen in the activity. This helps them to be comfortable asking an authority figure important questions and to gain confidence in themselves when their questions are handled as important and serious.

Activity #3: In art class, collages can be made from magazine clippings showing workers doing a variety of jobs. There should be at least 10 pictures depicting different jobs or careers. The collage is constructed on the front of their career awareness portfolios and then laminated. This makes the portfolios distinctive and serves as a method for identifying what belongs the collection of work-related activities. Locate magazines and newspapers that have a representative sample of the various ethnic and racial groups. Children need to see people that "look like them" to make the experience really meaningful. Each child can give a presentation of the different jobs on his or her collage and explain what he or she thinks the workers do on their jobs. However, the presentations should be given to groups of four or five members; otherwise, children may not find the exercise engaging if they have to listen to 20 reports on portfolios.

Care should be taken during this activity so that students make a variety of selections. Stress to them that they are searching out people who are performing jobs--not jobs they necessarily want to do when they grow up. If left to their own preferences, most of the students select doctors, lawyers, singers, and basketball players. Allow only one or two of these. The purpose is to help students become aware of jobs and careers that they do not realize are available.

Competencies: This activity teaches the students to search out information on careers of interest, synthesize it (arrange it on the collage), and promotes communication skills. Motor skills are developed through the cutting and pasting activities.

Activity #4: A teacher, parent, or business leader can lead a class discussion on the qualities of a good worker and compare them to the qualities of a good student. Help students recognize the transfer of skills and expectations between school and the working world. Qualities may include punctuality, following directions, neatness of appearance, following safety

rules, teamwork, accepting individual differences, etc. Brightly colored activity sheets, one for good worker and one for good student, help maintain the focus of the students and assist them in organizing their responses. For example, in the center of the activity sheet have the students write "Good Worker" and then facilitate a discussion of the qualities of a good worker. write these on the board as they are named so the students can see the correct spelling as they write them on the activity sheet. Repeat this exercise using "Good Student" in the center. Discuss with the students the similarities between the two and the transferability of good student skills. Many will be the same.

Competencies: This activity helps to develop ways of organizing thoughts, the ability to find the similarities and differences between two concepts, listening skills, and shared discussion skills

Activity #5: The discussion and completion of the activity sheets can be followed by a fame of Job Bingo or it can be played as a self-contained activity. Using a traditional Bingo card form, list a characteristic of a good worker in each space. Examples include completing tasks, friendliness, helpfulness, and self-direction. Several versions of the card are needed. Students can use wrapped low-fat, sugarless candies as tokens and they get to keep them when the game is over. The game can be played many times to reinforce the qualities needed for securing and maintaining a job.

Competencies: This activity develops fine motor dexterity, vocabulary acuity, and listening skills.

Activity #6: Students search out an article in a newspaper or magazine that features a successful working person. Because the focus in on awareness and not exploration, the articles do not necessarily need to be about a job which they have an interest. Locate articles that profile someone of the same gender and race. Students need to see others that resemble

them enjoying work and achieving success. Have the students briefly share their articles and what their workers do with small groups.

Competencies: This activity teaches students to search out specific information, reinforces the notion that people "like them" work and are successful, helps to build communication skills, and encourages them to summarize information in a clear, succinct manner.

Activity #7: After collecting information about the many jobs that people do from the previous exercises, students identify jobs that they would like to research. Each student develops a letter including two or three questions about a career and send it to an adult working in that field or job. The letter can be written on stationary designed by the class as a group. To find participants to respond to the letters, contact such groups as the Chamber of Commerce. Coordination and follow-up are ***essential*** to ensure that all letters receive an appropriate and timely reply.

Competencies: This activity teaches students how to search out information and how to write a formal business letter to an outside agency or person (proper protocol should be followed). In addition, it builds self-esteem when their questions are important enough to get a response from a working adult. Developing the stationary as a group encourages the development of team work as well as shows group creativity.

Activity #8: Book report assignments can include books that show one or more of the characters performing a job. The book itself does not have to be specifically about jobs. For example, Wendy Towles' The Real McCoy depicts a successful African American inventor and Richard Scarry's Great Steamboat Mystery shows how detectives solve crimes. The focus of the book reports can include such themes as job requirements and people working or serving their community as workers. The reports can be presented in class (and even videotaped) so

that students are exposed to a greater variety of careers, jobs, and working people. Discussion can follow the presentation of each book report.

Competencies: This activity incorporates career and work awareness into reading and writing activities. Communication and thinking skills are developed as students present their reports and answer unrehearsed questions. In addition, the students become accustomed to speaking before an audience and processing information spontaneously.

Activity #9: In writing workshops, short essays are assigned describing jobs students **might** like to have when they "grow up." The previous activities will provide the students with a variety of career options. Again, this is for career awareness. Give the students simple criteria to address when writing their essays. Such questions may include the following: What does the worker do on this job? Why would you like this job? What might you not like about this job? Why did you choose this job to write about? Not more than three or four questions should be addressed so that elementary children will maintain focus on the purpose of the assignment.

Competencies: The activity allows students to give some thought to the information they have been gathering, to organize it into a coherent written assignment, to answer specific questions, and to evaluate their selections. It can be incorporated into a regular writing assignment to integrate classroom activities with career awareness.

Activity #10: In addition to the traditional book report, a book can be read aloud to students. Some excellent selections include Uncle Jed's Barbershop by Margaree King Mitchell, Arthur's Pet Business by Marc Brown, and The Berenstain Bears and Mama's New Job by Stan and Jan Berenstain. The students write a summary statement ad draw a picture about what they think is the most important job the worker(s) perform. Divide the class into small groups of about four members and have the students share their summary statements

and explain their pictures. Another option is to compile the work into a class booklet to be displayed in the school library.

Competencies: This activity helps students focus on listening skills for the purpose of summarizing the information and making an evaluation about the importance of tasks. By sharing information wit and explaining their drawing to other students, they get to practice presenting to an audience. It is a self-esteem booster for them to be a part of a collective work on display in the library.

Activity #11: Three to five "hands-on" career or work stations can be set up so that students can obtain actual experience with a particular job. Because of their age, do not overwhelm them with too many choices. Lectures and mere demonstrations should be avoided. Only jobs that lend themselves to "hands-on" activities should be undertaken. These work stations can include computers, banking, retailing, cosmetology, horticulture, food preparation, health care, construction, TV production, journalism, etc. Resources for setting up the work centers can be parents, local businesses, locate educational institutions (college students are great), and social agencies. Take pictures of the students performing the jobs at the workstations under the guidance of a "master." Answer question they have. Finish the activity at the work station by having each student complete a short evaluation about the job. Questions for assessment may include: What did you like best about the job? What did you like least? Do not have a long questionnaire for them to fill out.

Competencies: This activity allows students actually to experience some of the aspects of various jobs (i.e., taking the inside of a computer apart and putting it back together). It also gives them an opportunity to listen and follow oral directions as they learn new skills. By answering the questionnaire, they learn to evaluate the experience in relation to themselves.

The pictures provide them with a visual of what they did and allow them to see themselves as workers.

Activity #12: Show videos that have a worker or workers as part of the story such as Charlotte's Web and Swiss Family Robinson, that deal with specific jobs such as the I Wanna Be a... series (Greg James Production, 1995), or that portray community service. They can be watched in their entirety or in sections. The discussion can include various tasks of the workers, the qualities that make the characters good and effective workers, and the importance of responsible community members.

Competencies: This activity helps students analyze and extract specific information from a more general context. The discussion facilitates the development of oral communication skills and interaction within a group.

Activity #13: Use the Internet to research various career options. Web browsers, such as Netscape, are user-friendly and the students can be taught to use them very easily. Have the students search for and print information for two jobs that they have studied or have a interest in. If your school does not have access to the World Wide Web, contact one of the local colleges or universities and schedule a computer lab. This can open up a whole new world for many students, especially those that have limited life experiences. Most colleges and universities are more than happy to cooperate, and students always enjoy field trips.

Competencies: This activity provides the students with the ability to search information and they learn about how to use current technology.

Activity #14: Celebrate career and work awareness accomplishments and provide an avenue for the students to display their work by holding a career awareness ceremony. To prepare for this special event, have students create their own exhibits from their career activities. The ceremony can include three parts--receiving a certificate of completion; having

friends and family members, school officials, and community participants view the exhibits and ask questions; and holding a small reception where the major players interact and form greater linkages including partnerships to promote educational objectives. For example, members of the community that responded to the job-related letters can be invited and given a certificate of appreciation. In preparation for developing ICDPs, second graders can attend a "dress rehearsal" where exhibits are explained and questions answered.

Competencies: This activity helps students gain experience in organizing a major event as well as arranging their exhibits to be viewed by interested groups. A sense of accomplishment is experienced when the students receive their certificates and become the "experts" on their portfolios. In addition, communication and interpersonal skills are developed as the students discuss and answer questions about their exhibits.

Implementation

As with most designs, putting ideas into practice presents the greatest challenge. Many details have to be worked out and coordinated. Many great plans fail at this phase due to improper or incomplete implementation. However, this mode and suggested activities should help major stakeholders make their strategic plans workable. Included below are six guiding principles that should aid in the transition to the operational stage.

- Prepare your materials far in advance.
- Stress the integration of your program into daily classroom activities and curriculum goals.
- Recruit additional help for "hands-on" activities.
- Consider the attention span of the audience (30 - 60 minutes).
- Encourage school personnel to create additional related activities or lessons for reinforcement and continuity purposes.
- Do not lose focus of the intended mission.

Recommendations

After completing the ICDP pilot program and reflecting on what worked and what did not, several recommendations have been developed to make the over all process more effective. These recommendations are important and can greatly impact the success of the proposed model and activities.

- Establish a reasonable, agreed-upon timeline.
- Establish a budget and funding sources.
- Determine an effective adult/child ratio--perhaps 1 to 8.
- Have all stakeholders sign a written contract with clear role and responsibility assignments.
- Make sure everyone is "on the same page."
- Involve support personnel from the inception (guidance counselors, classroom aids, office staff, librarians)
- Encourage parental involvement and support.
- Anticipate modifications and accommodations for students with special needs.
- Do not over-plan--allow room for change.
- Provide ideas for integrating the program into general curriculum.
- Establish a school liaison to facilitate communication between stakeholders.
- Provide a clear focus and purpose for each activity.
- Develop an evaluation/assessment plan.

Evaluation and Assessment

The above recommendations are based on a summative program evaluation. If possible a representative from all of the stakeholder groups, including students, should be part of this evaluation process. The result will be a better tool for preparing students to be productive workers and citizens. Assessment recommendations are given below.

- Develop an on-going evaluation process (perhaps monthly) for teachers and other major stakeholders

- Consider student reactions and suggestions
- Develop a summative evaluation directly examining the mission and objectives
- Maintain accurate documentation (raw data)--for example, journal entries
- Use the evaluation results to makes changes in the program
- Consider using data to conduct classroom research or share in a journal

Conclusion

This discussion of career and work awareness is not intended to be exhaustive, but a starting place for instituting ICDPs. The suggested activities in this proposal are simple, inexpensive, and can be integrated into regular classroom activities while encouraging the development of connections with community and business organizations. Many individuals and groups in the community want to assist schools, but do not know how or when. Linkages with the business community and social agencies can lead to mentoring relationships which can be exceptionally beneficial to students.

This mission statement should always guide the career and work awareness activities. Above all, remember that career awareness expands the student's vision of the future. It provides them with a greater arsenal of tools to draw upon when the time comes for them to begin career exploration and finally career preparation. No one can prepare for something he or she is unaware of. This state of unawareness or unpreparedness is quite confining and limits life choices.

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